

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 72

By Henry

A RESOLUTION to recognize Betty Nixon for her honorable and astute service to the people of Tennessee on the occasion of her retirement.

WHEREAS, it is most appropriate that the members of this body should honor those estimable citizens who have performed their duties with the utmost probity, and whose efforts throughout their years of public service have been dedicated to providing thoughtful and exemplary service to the citizens of Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, Betty Nixon is one such citizen who has served with honor and distinction during her long career in public service; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Nixon is taking a much deserved retirement from her post as Assistant Vice-Chancellor for Community, Neighborhood and Government Relations at Vanderbilt University after seventeen years of meritorious and effective service linking Vanderbilt's programs, services, and strengths to people, communities, and organizations across Tennessee and the nation; and

WHEREAS, Betty Nixon's fervent belief that people should be treated equally, that everyone's voice matters, combined with an innate ability to bring people together, led Ms. Nixon to a life of public service; she has been a civil rights and women's rights activist, teacher, politician, lobbyist, press secretary, businesswoman, volunteer, wife, and mother, and always, she has been an agent of change; and

WHEREAS, a strong proponent of urban-integrated environments, Ms. Nixon won her first race for Nashville's Metro Council in 1975, thereby becoming the first woman elected to represent the 18th Council District, and she was also the first woman to serve as Chair of the Budget and Finance Committee; and

WHEREAS, Councilwoman Nixon was a staunch and tireless advocate for the protection of Nashville's older residential neighborhoods and historic architecture, including the historic Customs House on Broadway; and

WHEREAS, an ardent Democrat, Betty Nixon managed presidential candidate Walter Mondale's Tennessee campaign in 1984 and helped lead the state's delegation to the National Democratic Convention, even as her brother, John Chiles, was serving as state House Republican leader; and

WHEREAS, after a dozen years serving on the Metro Council and running her first mayoral campaign, Betty Nixon managed Jim Sasser's successful 1988 U.S. Senate re-election campaign before taking a job on his staff, but the pace of federal government was too slow for her, "I'd been involved in city government, where you could feel, smell and touch the results of your work," she said. Consequently, when Vanderbilt called in 1990, she answered; and

WHEREAS, Vanderbilt's Vice Chancellor for Public Affairs, Michael Schoenfeld, said of Ms. Nixon, "There are very few aspects of the community that do not intersect with Vanderbilt in some way. And there are even fewer people who could have orchestrated such a seamless web of connections with government officials, neighborhood leaders, and ordinary citizens with the clarity and focus that Betty brought to the task. If Betty Nixon didn't exist, we would have had to invent her."; and

WHEREAS, in 1991, Betty Nixon fell short in her second mayoral bid, but quickly regrouped, joining the Nashville Electric Service Board, as well as the Davidson County Election Commission, when both organizations were in trouble; her peerless integrity and tireless commitment to duty positively and significantly impacted both organizations; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Nixon's distinctive life includes service as Deputy Press Secretary to Governor Ray Blanton (1975-1979); State Manager, Mondale Ferraro Presidential Campaign (1984); Board Member, Oasis Center (1988-1990); State Campaign Manager, U.S. Senator James R. Sasser (1988); Professional Staff, U.S. Senate, Subcommittee on Intergovernmental Relations (1989); Founder, Women in the Nineties (1992); Chairman, Bill Wilkerson Hearing and Speech Center (1995-1997); Board, West End United Methodist Church (1998-2004);

President, Nashville Women's Breakfast Club; Chairwoman of Nashville Electric Service (1992 and 2004); and Chairwoman, Davidson County Election Commission (2003-2005); and

WHEREAS, in addition to serving as Chairwoman of the Tennessee Women's Political Caucus, Ms. Nixon presently serves on the Boards of Citizen's Bank; Youth Encouragement Services; Tennessee State University Business Incubation Center; YMCA Black Achievers; The Rochelle Center; Bill Wilkerson Center; Alcohol and Drug Council of Middle Tennessee; Project Pencil; Nashville Institute for the Arts; and The United Way; and

WHEREAS, a grateful community has expressed its appreciation to Ms. Nixon by awarding her several high honors, including the Athena Award in 1998 and the YMCA Woman of Achievement Award in 1995; and

WHEREAS, her many civic and professional accomplishments aside, Betty Nixon is most appreciative of the love and companionship she shares with her husband, Henry Clark, and their five children, Mignon Nixon, Anne Nixon, Hank Clark, Susan Clark, and Becky Clark-Fuller; and grandchildren, Marin Fuller and Flynn Fuller; and

WHEREAS, in retirement, Ms. Nixon looks forward to working on her historic 18th Avenue South home, gardening, and spending time with her family; and

WHEREAS, Betty Nixon is wholly committed to the noble precepts of public service that have earned Tennessee recognition as the "Volunteer State," and she should be specially recognized for her distinguished record of service; and

WHEREAS, throughout her estimable career, Ms. Nixon has demonstrated the utmost professionalism, ability, and integrity, winning the unbridled respect and admiration of her colleagues and fellow citizens; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we hereby honor and commend Betty Nixon for her many valuable contributions to her community as a devoted public servant and salute her unswerving commitment to living the examined life with courage and conviction. As she steps down from her post as Assistant Vice-Chancellor for Community, Neighborhood and Government Relations

at Vanderbilt University, we extend to her our heartfelt wishes for a happy and fulfilling retirement, along with every continued success in her future endeavors.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.